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Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Convention Report.
June 1981

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REPORT

TO THE

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

BY

COUNCILLOR BRIAN HINKLEY

ON HIS ATTENDANCE AT THE

31ST ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION

HELD ON

MAY 31st - JUNE 3, 1981

CONSTELLATION HOTEL, TORONTO, ONTARIO

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P R E F A C E

THE 31ST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE ONTARIO MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION WAS HELD OVER A FOUR DAY PERIOD COMMENCING ON SUNDAY, MAY 3, AND CONCLUDING ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3.

THE ASSOCIATION IS COMPOSED MAINLY OF MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. THEIR DISCUSSION OF POLICY FOR THE MOST PART, REVOLVES AROUND THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION, HOW BEST TO CO-ORDINATE, STREAMLINE, UNDERSTAND AND DELIVER SERVICES SO THAT CLIENTS ARE BETTER SERVED. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT UP FRONT POLICY CHANGES ARE LEFT TO THE POLITICIANS TO PUBLICLY ARTICULATE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, BUT THAT THEIR SENIOR POLICY ADVISORS OFTEN PLANT THE SEEDS OF CHANGE.

MANY OF THESE SEEDS OF CHANGE HOWEVER MAY START BY WAY OF THE MANY INFORMAL AND FORMAL DISCUSSIONS MADE THROUGH CONTACTS ESTABLISHED BECAUSE OF THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION. BY BRINGING TOGETHER THE VARIOUS PEOPLE IN THE DIFFERENT STRATA OF THE GOVERNMENT SOCIAL SERVICE FIELD: INFORMATION SHARING, EXPERIENCES AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES ARE FACILITATED. THE DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE PROVINCE THEREFORE BENEFIT FROM EACH OTHERS EXPERIENCES.

THE ASSOCIATION OF COURSE HAVE THEIR OWN EXECUTIVE AND MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THEIR WORK AND PLAN THEIR ACTIVITIES. THE REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH AND THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE CAN FEEL PROUD THAT OUR SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSIONER, MR. MAC CARSON HAS BEEN CHOSEN AS THE NEW PRESIDENT

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FOR THE O.M.S.S.A. AT THIS POINT IN TIME I WILL JUST ECHO THE REMARKS AND COMMENTS MADE BY OUR REGIONAL CHAIRMAN AND MANY OTHER COUNCILLORS AND INDIVIDUALS AND CONGRATULATE MR. CARSON FOR RECEIVING AND UNDERTAKING THIS ADDED RESPONSIBILITY.

THE CONVENTION ITSELF DEALT WITH A MYRIAD OF TOPICS AND POLICIES AS WELL AS CARRYING OUT THE BUSINESS ACTIVITY OF THE ASSOCIATION. A FULL REPORT ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE CONVENTION WOULD BECOME RATHER LENGTHY AND PERHAPS TOUCH ON MANY MATTERS THAT THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEMBERS WOULD NOT BE INTERESTED IN. I HAVE THEREFORE DECIDED TO ISOLATE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE CONVENTION AND HIGHLIGHT THOSE AREAS THAT MAY STRIKE AN INTEREST AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS - JOHN SEWELL

THE FORMER MAYOR OF THE CITY OF TORONTO MR. JOHN SEWELL ADDRESSED THE GATHERING ON THE BROAD GENERAL THEME OF SOCIAL SERVICES ..... WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHAT'S TO BE DONE.

HE STARTED OUT BY SAYING THAT THERE IS A STRANGE POLITICAL DRIFT TAKING PLACE. THIS DRIFT IS CAPSULIZED IN THE FOLLOWING WORDS. "IF WE REALLY WORK HARD TO HELP THE WEALTHY WE WILL SOMEHOW ALL BE BETTER OFF."

HE SAID THE MECHANISIMS AND CATCH-WORDS USED TO FULFILL THIS DRIFT ARE, RATIONALIZATION, POLICY REVIEW, RE-EXAMINE PRIORITIES, COMMUNITY INTEGRATION ETC. THESE VARIOUS STEPS AND CHANGES ARE DESIGNED TO GET THE "BIGGEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK." AFTER THESE CHANGES FAIL THEN RESTRAINT SETS IN, THEN WE ARE TOLD WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CHANGE OUR DESIRES AND NOW CUTBACKS ARE STARTING TO TAKE PLACE.

HE SAID THE NEW THEORY IS TO HELP THOSE WITH MONEY. THEY WILL IN TURN INVEST AND THEN WE CAN GIVE THE WEALTHY MORE MONEY. THE PROBLEM ARISES AS TO WHERE GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO GET THE MONEY. THE ANSWER IS FROM THE POOR OR THOSE AT THE BOTTOM.

HE SAID MOST PEOPLE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL SERVICES DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THIS THEORY IS SUPPOSED TO WORK.

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HE ALSO SAID MOST COMPANIES WANT STABILITY AND GROWTH NOT GOVERNMENT MONEY. HE SAID BUSINESS HAS A VESTED INTEREST TO ENSURE STABILITY AND YOU DON'T ACHIEVE ECONOMIC STABILITY BY TAKING AWAY FROM THE POOR AND GIVING TO THE RICH.

HE ALSO WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT THE WORD "POOR". HE SAID IN TO-DAY'S SOCIETY "POOR" JUST DOESN'T SEEM TO FIT ANYMORE. HE SAID WHAT WE ARE REALLY TALKING ABOUT ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE DISADVANTAGED, HANDICAPPED, SENIORS, DEPRIVED, ETC., BUT NOT ONE OF THESE WORDS ALONE ARE ADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE. MR. SEWELL COINED A NEW PHRASE. HE REFERRED TO THEM AS THE "PEOPLE ON THE PORCH".

HE SAID SOCIETY IS IN A DEPRESSION, BUT THAT TO-DAY'S DEPRESSION IS MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930's.

HE SAID SOCIETY HAS LEARNED HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES AND HAS SET IN PLACE MANY PROGRAMMES AND SCHEMES TO HELP PEOPLE.

HE OUTLINED VARIOUS INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMMES SUCH AS DISABILITY PENSIONS, UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ETC., HE TALKED ABOUT THE IMPORTANT WORK OF SOCIAL SERVICE STAFF TO ADMINISTER THE SCHEMES AND TO HELP THE PEOPLE ON THE PORCH GET OFF OF THE PORCH. HE ALSO POINTED TO THE FACT THAT THE STAFF ARE IN A POSITION TO IMPACT UPON POLICY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PEOPLE ON THE PORCH. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PEOPLE ON

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THE PORCH ARE A GREAT DEAL MORE ARTICULATE AND EDUCATED AND THESE PEOPLE KNOW HOW TO SPEAK OUT AND MOBILIZE. HE SAID SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE LAID OFF WORKERS WHO HAVE THE STRENGTH AND WILL TO STAND UP FOR THEMSELVES. HE POINTED OUT THAT BASICALLY ALL OF US ARE IN THE SAME BOAT. HE SAID THE MAIN DIFFERENCE WITH THIS DEPRESSION IS THAT WE HAVE THE RESOURCES TO HANDLE THE PROBLEMS.

HOWEVER, IF THE TREND TOWARDS DISMANTLING THE SOCIAL SERVICE SYSTEMS TAKE PLACE WE WILL HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS. SOCIAL SERVICE STAFF MUST DESCRIBE THE SITUATION OF THE PEOPLE ON THE PORCH. IT MUST BE POINTED OUT HOW SMALL THINGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO THESE PEOPLE. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BABY BONUS CHEQUE IS LATE, IF MORTGAGE PAYMENTS ARE NOT MET, IF ALCOHOLISM UPSETS FAMILY LIFE. HE SAID REAL LIFE SITUATIONS MUST BE DESCRIBED SO THAT ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY IS UNDERSTOOD.

HE SAID COMMUNITY RESOURCES MUST BE USED NOT ONLY TO SERVE PRESENT NEEDS BUT TO MAKE CHANGES. HE SAID THE PEOPLE ON THE PORCH SHOULD BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED AND HELP SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO GET THEM ORGANIZED. HE RE-ITERATED THE BELIEF THAT MOST FORWARD THINKING BUSINESSMEN UNDERSTAND THE LONG TERM BENEFITS OF A STABLE SOCIETY THAT ALLOWS FOR STEADY GROWTH. HE THEREFORE FEELS THAT BUSINESS IS AN ALLY IN THE SOCIAL SERVICE FIELD.

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HE CONCLUDED HIS SPEECH BY ISSUING A CHALLENGE TO THE SOCIAL SERVICE STAFF BY SAYING THEY SHOULD BE TAKING MORE OF A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND OFFER GREATER DIRECTION ON WHERE TO GO.

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE FRANK DREA
MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE THE REMARKS OF THE MINISTER WERE CIRCULATED FOR THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS INFORMATION. I HOPE THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TOOK THE TIME TO READ THE CONTENTS OF THE MINISTER'S REMARKS, SINCE A MAJOR POLICY CHANGE REGARDING CERTAIN PEOPLE ON FAMILY BENEFITS ASSISTANCE WAS ANNOUNCED.

BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS MATTER I HAVE TAKEN THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INCLUDE THE MINISTER'S REMARKS IN MY REPORT FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE ONCE AGAIN. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS DEVELOPING IN THIS AREA AND HOW WE AS A COMMITTEE SHOULD RESPOND.

MR. DREA ALSO SAID SOMETHING ELSE THAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN HIS SPEECH BUT I THOUGHT WAS SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF INFLUENCING OR UNDERSTANDING POLICY.

HE MENTIONED THAT HE WILL BE RELYING TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE ON THE ADVICE HE RECEIVES FROM HIS PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANT, MR. ANDY WATSON. HE URGED THE AUDIENCE TO WORK WITH MR. WATSON

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AND TO USE HIM MORE SO THAN THE MINISTER HIMSELF.

REACTION TO KEYNOTE SPEAKER PANEL

A PANEL OF THREE WAS ARRANGED TO OFFER COMMENTS ON JOHN SEWELL'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS. THE PANEL CONSISTED OF ALDERMAN GORDON CRESSY FROM METRO TORONTO, MR. RICHARD FROST, THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER FROM THE REGION OF PEEL, AND MR. IAN TURNBULL, ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE REGION OF MUSKOKA.

ALDERMAN GORDON CRESSY:

ALDERMAN CRESSY IN THE MAIN AGREED WITH MR. SEWELL. HE SAID IF THE 60'S WERE THE DECADE OF HOPE AND THE 70'S WERE THE DECADE OF UPWARD MOBILITY THEN THE 80'S IS THE MEAN DECADE.

HE SAID THAT THE SENIOR LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT INTRODUCE POLICIES THAT CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND CONSEQUENTLY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IS OFTEN NOT IN A POSITION TO REACT OR RESPOND TO THESE PROBLEMS.

HE SAID PEOPLE IN THE SOCIAL SERVICE FIELD MUST ENLARGE THEIR AUDIENCE. THEY MUST LEARN HOW TO USE THE MEDIA BETTER, ADVERTISE THEIR WORK AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TO TAKE GREATER ADVANTAGE OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. LIKE JOHN SEWELL, MR. CRESSY POINTED OUT AGAIN THAT THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY PREFERS STABILITY.

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HE SAID POLITICIANS CONSTANTLY NEED REMINDING OF THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL SERVICES. THEY MUST BE TOUCHED WHERE THEY LIVE. HE SAID CLIENTS SHOULD BE USED MORE OFTEN TO TELL THEIR EXPERIENCES. HE SAID A CLIMATE MUST BE CREATED SO THAT THE SYSTEM OF SERVICE CAN RESPOND AT THE RIGHT TIME. HE SAID THAT HOLDING THE LINE IS NOT A VICTORY FOR ANYONE.

MR. RICHARD FROST:

MR. FROST SAID THE SOCIAL SERVICE STAFF SHOULD TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AND PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT. HE SAID STAFF SHOULD RESPOND TO PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES AND INITIATE NEW DIRECTIONS.

HE SAID THERE ARE COMPETING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE AND IT IS NOT AT ALL VALID TO INCREASE THIS COMPETITION AMONG NEEDED SERVICES. INSTEAD WE SHOULD STRIVE FOR COST EFFECTIVENESS.

HE SAID THAT MUNICIPALITIES IS ON THE FRONT LINE OF RECEIVING PROBLEMS, AND IT IS AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL THAT PROBLEMS CAN BEST BE DEALT WITH. HOWEVER, HE IS VERY SUSPICIOUS AND CONCERNED OVER INCREASED MILL RATES IF THE MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVEMENT IS INCREASED. HE SAID THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT MUST NOT BE TEMPTED TO PASS ON COSTS TO THE MUNICIPALITIES.

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MR. IAN TURNBULL:

MR. TURNBULL STARTED OUT BY SAYING THAT THE PATCHWORK OF SOCIAL SERVICE LEGISLATION CAUSES CONSIDERABLE ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES. HE SAID STANDARDS FOR FIELD WORK AND STAFF RATIO SHOULD BE SET. HE SAID THERE ARE TOO MANY MIXED SITUATIONS ACROSS THE PROVINCE. HE SAID SOME MUNICIPALITIES ARE BETTER ABLE TO RESPOND TO NEEDS, TO DEVELOP POLICY AND DO RESEARCH.

HE SAID TOO OFTEN THERE IS A COMBATIVE RATHER THAN A CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN STAFF AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL. HE SAID GREATER COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE AMONG STAFF ACROSS THE PROVINCE. HE ALSO WONDERED HOW MANY ADMINISTRATORS REALLY ENCOURAGE CLIENTS TO LOBBY POLITICIANS.

HOT ISSUES.

A PORTION OF THE CONFERENCE WAS SET ASIDE TO ALLOW ANYONE TO RAISE ANY ISSUE THAT IS OF CONCERN TO THEM. THESE QUESTIONS WERE VERY WIDE RANGING AND I'LL JUST LIST A FEW OF THE CONCERNS:-

1. THE 9.5% INCREASE IN SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTATION BUDGETS IS INSUFFICIENT.

2. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE ON MORE CLIENTS AND FUND SUPPORT SERVICES IF FUNDING IS BEING CUTBACK?

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3. THE CASH FLOW DELAYS FROM THE PROVINCE IS COSTING THE MUNICIPALITIES FAR TOO MUCH MONEY.

4. WORK ACTIVITY, DAYCARE AND PREVENTATIVE PROGRAMMES ARE NEEDED, BUT PROOF OF DOLLAR SAVINGS MUST BE DEMONSTRATED.

5. WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT POLICY ON CAPITAL EXPENDITURES FOR DAYCARE?

6. GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE RATES SHOULD BE INCREASED.

7. HOW DOES THE PROVINCE INTEND TO PROVIDE THE MECHANISM FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO PROVIDE INPUT INTO PROVINCIAL POLICY?

THERE WERE MANY OTHER QUESTIONS, BUT PERHAPS THESE FEW WILL PROVIDE THE COMMITTEE WITH SOME IDEA OF THE ISSUES RAISED.

DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES - MR. ROBERT CARMEN

MR. CARMEN STARTED HIS ADDRESS BY ASSURING THE AUDIENCE THAT THE DIRECTION OUTLINED BY THE MINISTER IS "FACT". HE SAID

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THAT DIALOGUE IS IMPORTANT AND THAT WE WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE THIS PROCESS. HE SAID THE MINISTRY HAS EMBARKED ON A RE-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED WITH THE CHILDREN SERVICES DIVISION.

HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE DUPLICATION OF SERVICES LIKE THE FAMILY BENEFITS ASSISTANCE AND GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE IS NOT SATISFACTORY. HE SAID THE MINISTRY WILL BE TRANSFERRING ABLED BODIED RECIPIENTS BACK TO G.W.A. ALONG WITH THE NECESSARY SUPPORT SYSTEMS. HE SAID HE WAS LOOKING FOR INPUT FROM THE MUNICIPALITIES ON THIS MATTER.

HE WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT MANY OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS POLICY DEVELOPMENT, THE HOSTEL PROGRAMME, DAY-CARE, HOMES FOR THE AGED, AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HOME CARE PROGRAMME.

HE SUMMED UP HIS ADDRESS BY SAYING THAT THE TRANSFER OF F.B.A. CLIENTS TO G.W.A. IS ONLY ONE MOVE OF MANY TOWARDS TRANSFERRIN GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES TO THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL. HE SAID THIS TREND WILL CONTINUE ON INTO THE FUTURE.

WORKSHOP ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

I ATTENDED A WORKSHOP ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES THAT COVERED THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE ON THE VARIOUS CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEES AROUND THE PROVINCE.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE REGION OF PEEL, THE REGION OF WATERLOO, HASTINGS - PRINCE EDWARD AND WINDSOR - ESSEX.

THE REGION OF PEEL DOES NOT HAVE A CHILDRENS' SERVICES COMMITTEE BUT DID TAKE PART IN A VOLUNTARY CO-ORDINATION PROJECT WHICH WILL CONCLUDE IN JULY OF THIS YEAR. THE PROVINCE CONTRIBUTED $38,500 TOWARDS THIS PROJECT.

ALL AREAS APPEAR TO BE PLEASED WITH THEIR PROGRESS TO DATE AND THE DIRECTION IN WHICH THEIR INDIVIDUAL CHILDRENS' SERVICES COMMITTEES ARE GOING. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THEY HAVEN'T HAD PROBLEMS TO DEAL WITH AND ARE STILL EXPERIENCING NEW DIFFICULTIES. BUT THE ONLY WAY EACH REGION WILL UNDERSTAND THEIR FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, PROGRAMMES, EVALUATION AND ALL THE ASPECTS OF DELIVERY OF SERVICE IN THE HOPES OF STREAMLINING, ELIMINATION OF DUPLICATION, ACHIEVING COST EFFECTIVENESS AND PROVIDING BETTER AND MORE EFFICIENT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IS TO IMPLEMENT A FULL OPERATING CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WILL RECALL THAT LAST YEAR THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE AND REGIONAL COUNCIL APPROVED A MODEL FOR A CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE HAMILTON-WENTWORTH REGION. THIS MODEL WAS ARRIVED AT AFTER APPROXIMATELY THREE YEARS OF WORK ON THE PART OF MANY INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES VOLUNTEERING THEIR TIME TO FORMULATE AN ACCEPTABLE MODEL.

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UNFORTUNATELY, THE MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES AT THAT TIME, MR. KEITH NORTON INFORMED US THAT NO MORE COMMITTEES WOULD BE FUNDED UNTIL THE PROGRESS OF THE PRESENT COMMITTEES WERE EVALUATED. THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PROCEED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROVED MODEL SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE PROVINCE. TO DATE, NO COMMITMENT HAS BEEN MADE BY THE MINISTRY.

WORKSHOP FOR FRONT LINE WORKERS

I ALSO ATTENDED A WORKSHOP LED BY PAT NIVEDEN, M.S.W. WHO IS AN EDUCATION CONSULTANT WITH McMASTER UNIVERSITY.

THE WORKSHOP WAS DESIGNED FOR WORKERS WHO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH WELFARE RECIPIENTS. THE GROUP WAS PUT THROUGH A COUPLE OF EXERCISES THAT EXAMINED EACH OTHERS OPENESS, SENSITIVITY AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE. IN SHORT, THE WORKSHOP ATTEMPTED TO GET PEOPLE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AND THE PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH.

I WAS PLEASED TO SEE A FEW OF OUR WORKERS FROM THE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT ATTEND EITHER ALL OR PARTS OF THE CONFERENCE. THIS AFFORDED ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH THE WORKERS VARIOUS MATTERS IN A SOMEWHAT MORE COMFORTABLE SETTING BOTH FOR MYSELF AND I AM SURE, SOME OF THE STAFF.

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SUMMARY

THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONFERENCE ENDED WITH A BANQUET WHERE IT HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED THAT OUR COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SERVICES, MR. MAC CARSON, WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE O.M.S.S.A. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE 1983 O.M.S.S.A. CONVENTION WILL BE HELD IN HAMILTON.

I AM SURE WE WILL SHOW THE DELEGATES WHAT A GREAT REGION WE HAVE BY DEMONSTRATING OUR WARM HOSPITALITY TO THOSE WHO ATTEND.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR RECOMMENDING MY ATTENDANCE. THE EXPERIENCE WAS BOTH EDUCATIONAL AND REWARDING. I AM OF THE OPINION THAT WE SHOULD STRIVE WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO HAVE AS MANY OF OUR STAFF ATTEND THESE CONFERENCES AND EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS. I WOULD ALSO SUGGEST THAT IN FUTURE, CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO SENDING TWO ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TOGETHER TO SUCH CONVENTIONS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.. THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SERVICES PRESENT TO THE COMMITTEE A FULL REPORT ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE REMARKS OF THE HONOURABLE FRANK DREA REGARDING THE TRANSFER OF SOME F.B.A. CLIENTS TO G.W.A.

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THAT AN EXAMINATION BE MADE OF THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF SUCH TRANSFER, ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES, POTENTIAL BENEFITS, IMPACT ON STAFF, CLIENT IMPACTS, INITIAL AND CONTINUING COSTS, THE PROVINCIAL COMMITTMENT AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS AND INFORMATION:

THAT THE COMMISSIONER RECOMMEND TO THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE THE ADVISABILITY OF HAVING THE HAMILTON-WENTWORTH REGION REQUEST THE MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A TRANSFER IN OUR REGION CONDITIONAL UPON A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE PROVINCE AND THE REGION:

AND THAT THE CONCERNS AND POSITION OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL BE COMMUNICATED TO THE HONOURABLE FRANK DREA IN THE MOST APPROPRIATE MANNER.

2. THAT ARRANGEMENTS BE MADE THROUGH THE OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CHAIRMAN TO MEET WITH THE MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES TO DISCUSS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CHILDREN'S SERVICE COMMITTEE WITH APPROPRIATE PROVINCIAL FUNDING IN THE HAMILTON-WENTWORTH REGION.

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3. WHEREAS THE TIME DELAYS CREATED BY THE METHOD OF CASH FLOW FROM THE PROVINCE TO THE MUNICIPALITIES FOR PAYMENTS OF GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE IS IN SOME CASES SIX WEEKS OR MORE.

AND WHEREAS THIS CASH FLOW DELAY IN MONIES RECEIVED PLACES AN EXTRA BURDEN UPON MUNICIPALITIES BY WAY OF EXCESSIVE CARRYING CHARGES.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH PETITION THE PROVINCIAL TREASURER AND THE MINISTER OF INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS TO ARRANGE FOR A MONTHLY CASH FLOW BASED UPON THE ANTICIPATED MONTHLY EXPENDITURES OF GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE.

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE FRANK DREA
MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES
M.P.P. SCARBOROUGH CENTRE
AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE ONTARIO
MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION
CONSTELLATION HOTEL, ETOBICOKE
MONDAY, JUNE 1, 1981 AT 9:30 A.M.

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a real pleasure to be with you today on the occasion of your 31st Annual Convention. This is one of my first functions at an annual event since my appointment as Minister of Community and Social Services and its quite fitting that it should be O.M.S.S.A. since you represent the largest group of delivery agents of the Ontario Government with respect to the administration of our social service programs.

As many of you will recall, prior to embarking on a career in politics, I served on the Social Assistance Review Board. In that capacity, I became very familiar with our income maintenance programs and obtained a good general knowledge of our other social services.

Having spent part of the last two months refamiliarizing myself with the details of the current state of the art, I am impressed with the developments that have taken place in the past few years. For instance:

- we now have an integrated Children's Services Delivery System.

- Our Mental Retardation Community Services have been expanded to a considerable degree.

- On the administrative side, we have decentralized decision-making for most of our programs with the balance currently in the process of decentralization.

- Most impressive of all, is the degree to which many municipalities have developed their social services.

Today, I wish to dedicate my remarks exclusively to the delivery of our income maintenance programs. I understand that this is listed as one of the topics of this afternoon's plenary session. I don't know what the conference planners had in mind when they scheduled this session, but I hope my comments will assist in stimulating this afternoon's discussion.

As most of you know, this item has been the subject of considerable debate during the past three years at both the political and the administrative level. Most recently, a joint OMSSA Ministry Committee has developed a paper identifying the administrative requirements of a variety of options for the delivery of our income maintenance programs.

In the meantime, the technology necessary to support an integrated delivery system is largely in place or in the process of development.

Having reviewed the whole situation in detail, I am convinced that the time has come for all of us to stop talking and start making some decisions.

I sense a general consensus for the need to develop a streamlined delivery system. As you know, the various Regional Review Commissions, (Robarts, Palmer, Mayo especially), recommended that the Regional Municipalities assume the responsibility for the administration of the Family Benefits Program. What they recommended, however, was for certain Regional Municipalities to administer Family Benefits along with their current responsibility for G.W.A. In addressing those and other similar suggestions, it is necessary to consider the future delivery of income maintenance in Ontario from a broader perspective which I think transcends jurisdictional or administrative considerations.

In order to decide who should be doing what, we need first to reassess the purpose and functions of our social assistance programs. Once we have decided on the "what" and the "why"; then the "who" and "how" should come easily.

It has been stated many times that the philosophy of social assistance in Ontario is that it is intended to supplement, rather than replace other available resources. By other resources I am not referring only to things like assets or other forms of income, I am speaking with particular reference to the individual's capacity to contribute towards his total or partial self-sufficiency.

I think I speak for all of us here today, when I say that, although we have done a relatively good job in ensuring that assets or other forms of income are utilized before granting assistance, we have some way to go in developing and co-ordinating the total range of support services necessary to encourage applicants and recipients to seek alternatives to the welfare cheque. We all have come to the conclusion that we are not doing any real service to the able-bodied recipient by failing to present these alternatives. In other words, welfare should not be, and will no longer be accepted as a way of life.

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This change in philosophy has taken place gradually during the last five years and, if we look around us, we find that the necessary support services have been put in place in many areas of the province. What is necessary now is to develop a co-ordinated approach to their delivery and to tie them directly to the eligibility determination process for social assistance.

Our current income maintenance programs have undergone a considerable number of changes since they were last repackaged in 1967. During this period, there has been a continued tendency for the province to assume an increased role by transferring portions of the responsibilty from G.W.A. to Family Benefits.

For instance, prior to 1967, the responsibility for sole support mothers was primarily municipal. The introduction of the Family Benefits Act expanded considerably the eligibility criteria for the provincial program; similar action took place in 1973 when we transferred most of the permanently unemployable to Family Benefits.

What has resulted is a situation whereby the province now carries the primary responsibility for the provision of assistance to many needy groups; however, the support services necessary for these people to attain total or partial self-sufficiency are contained elsewhere:

At the Municipal level - (Day Care)
At the Federal level - (Employment Services)
and
At the Community level - (Most services to the handicapped)

I am convinced that there is an urgent need to review our respective responsibilities in order to achieve two objectives.

1) to rationalize caseload responsibilities between municipalities and the province in order to achieve a more efficient, a more responsive, and a more controlled delivery system.

2) to integrate the responsibility for support services and for social assistance as much as possible.

Our social assistance caseload is composed of three basic groups:

The first group is made up of the sick, the disabled and the developmentally handicapped, many of whom have no access to an independent source of income. As far as I am concerned, these people will be treated as "pensioners", rather than recipients of social assistance. In addition we will continue to enhance their opportunities for participation in daily community life and for the full development of their potential through specialized provincially-funded programs.

For those who are able to achieve self-sufficiency, our provincial vocational Rehabilitation Services program is there to help them meet this objective.

Provision of income support to this group, therefore, will remain a direct provincial responsibility.

The second group consists of able-bodied, employment-ready recipients who are usually on assistance for a short period of time. These people are mostly on G.W.A. Our expectations with respect to these recipients always have been up front. We will assist them as long as we are satisfied that they are actively looking for work. The responsibility for providing service to this group is also non-negotiable, since I believe that municipalities are more suited to deal with them.

The third group is composed of able-bodied recipients or spouses who require some kind of support service in order to get off assistance. These types of cases are found on both provincial and municipal caseloads, the majority being on Family Benefits. The expectations for this group have varied considerably. At the provincial level, emphasis has been placed recently on the Work Incentive Program and the sole-support mothers projects. At the local level, some municipalities have developed a considerable network of support services such as day care, life skills and employment counselling whereby they are now able to offer these recipients a real alternative.

It is my intention, therefore, to begin negotiations for the transfer of these recipients back to the municipal system.

I suspect that one of the reasons why this area has been the subject of a lot of discussion with no concrete action is the magnitude of the task at hand. F.B.A. and G.W.A, represent about 50% of my Ministry's budget. Both programs serve, in any one month, in excess of 200,000 applicants and recipients. The turnover rate in G.W.A. is approximately 30% in any one month; in F.B.A. approximately 40% of all recipients experience a change in circumstances monthly.

Another reason might have been the need to review and decide upon an appropriate structure at the local level to ensure that services are delivered in a viable, cost-effective and professional manner.

With respect to some of the technical considerations, you are aware that we have come a long way in the last few years in the area of systems development. Work is currently underway for the development of an integrated computer system which will replace all existing systems, over the next 18 months. In addition, we need to develop a records management process which will be standardized across the province and will facilitate the need for file portability.

While these developments are taking place, we will be continuing with the decentralization of Family Benefits to our area and local offices. As you know, the first phase is now complete whereby all caseload management decisions are made locally and effected through a network of computer terminals. The second phase, which will start in our Barrie Area Office next month, will result in the transfer of files and complete decision-making responsibility to the area and local offices.

My intention for the rationalization of program responsibility is not to continue with two separate pieces of legislation, but to consolidate all social assistance legislation into one Act. Work should get underway shortly to start this process.

I guess the most important question that municipal officials will be asking is "How much will all this cost municipalities? Is this another attempt to shift more of the financial burden to the local tax base?"

It is my intent to effect these changes within the current cost-sharing ratios. In addition, this change provides us with the ideal opportunity to rationalize other cost-sharing arrangements. For instance, there are three levels of cost-sharing within the G.W.A. Program, (50%, 80% and 100%).

If we work at it, I am sure that we can develop a mechanism that will see one standard level of cost-sharing across all municipal social service programs. If we can achieve this, we will have gone a long way toward ensuring that decisions on program priorities will be made in response to identified needs; and not, as sometimes is the case, on the basis of funding considerations.

I may be optimistic, but I am convinced that these changes, when implemented, will result in significantly reduced costs for the same level of service since they will remove most barriers to an efficient delivery system while retaining a high level of local involvement.

I have the utmost confidence in our municipal system to get the job done. Most of the innovative ideas to respond to the needs of the people of this province have originated at the local level. I am also convinced that all the required expertise is right here in this room. What is necessary is for all of us to start working right away.

In the meantime, I would like to see some pilots implemented immediately in a few municipalities in order for us to fine-tune the implementation of the large scale transfer when the time comes. Many of you have expressed an interest in such projects in the past and I now invite you and your councils to let us know your intentions.

Having reviewed all the options open to us, I am convinced that the course of action I have outlined this morning is the right one. In spite of the size of the task and the tremendous amount of detail that needs to be worked out, I am satisfied that, with proper planning, we will be able to get the job done with relative ease.

I would imagine, however, that there will be some raised eyebrows when my colleagues from the other provinces hear about my proposal to transfer these cases back to the municipalities; as most provinces have assumed full delivery responsibility for Income Maintenance.

I want you to realize that I am bucking this trend. I'm putting my complete faith in you and your staff to meet this challenge.

In closing, I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me this morning. My staff and I look forward to working with you and your councils during the planning and implementation of these changes.

Best wishes for a successful conference.

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